

Culture Here: A Report on Cultural Assets and Activities

Nashville Assessment 2015

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Cultural Assets and Activities

Introduction

The cultural vitality of the Nashville area stands as its hallmark, enjoyed by residents and visitors and recognized globally for its uniqueness and quality. The breadth and depth of culture and the arts as a measure of community is felt in many ways. Residents gain pleasure from interacting with the cultural environment, young and old fulfill intellectual and emotional drives for expression and knowledge, and bonds between individuals and neighborhoods are strengthened. Surrounding this cultural milieu are institutions, organizations, leaders and participants that carry forward the cultural life and aspirations of the overall community.

Nashville has achieved tremendous growth and development of its cultural life, building on a heritage extending more than two centuries. Each generation lives the life of the community anew, and this is where the excitement and vitality of contemporary Nashville as a city grounded in the arts is most spectacular. With more than 658,000 inhabitants, Nashville is a major city on the rise. Even more, a reputation as the "it city" has catapulted the area to new appreciation of its cosmopolitan qualities and its direction forward¹.

About the Research

The endeavor of examining the cultural life of a community involves specific methods and approaches. More than simply an inventory of variables, understanding the relationships of people, place and activity is central to capturing anything as dynamic as cultural vitality. In order to accomplish this, the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce's Research Center, along with the Metro Arts Commission, conducted an array of processes leading to a fuller understanding of the landscape of cultural activity in place.

The research activity entailed qualitative and quantitative components. The Research Center conducted a survey and in-depth interview process between November 2014 and June 2015 that engaged more than 400 key leaders, stakeholders and representatives in the artistic and cultural life of the city. These ranged across many performing, visual, literary, participative and "maker" arts. Input from each of those processes resulted in a rich set of information about cultural activity generally and with specific references to subsectors of arts and culture.

This study relies on a broad array of quantitative data from several key sources. Cultural entity data and information was drawn from proprietary databases such as Avention, EMSI and ESRI, as well as from data provided by the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee (Now Playing Nashville), Metro Arts Commission, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Metro Library, Metro Public Works, Metro Parks, Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation and the Nashville Area

¹ Nashville's Latest Big Hit Could Be the City Itself, New York Times, Jan. 3, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/09/us/nashville-takes-its-turn-in-the-spotlight.html?_r=0

Chamber of Commerce. Public data was drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau and other government sources.

Assessment of Cultural Activity

The Landscape of Culture and Arts

Nashville represents one of the nation's largest cities as measured by geographic area. Covering some 525 square miles, the consolidated Nashville-Davidson County encompasses many types of community settings, from dense residential patterns and commercial districts to suburban subdivisions and even areas with a rural character. Equally, the diversity of population has become a feature of Nashville's cultural mix, with more than 100 languages spoken in Metro Public Schools and some 12 percent foreign-born population. The cosmopolitan identity of Nashville continues to move to the forefront of everyday experience, along with many traditional longstanding elements that shape the truly unique culture of the city.

Research suggests that increasingly competitive cities will be those that invite and foster creativity that is supported by a region's capacity for talent, tolerance and technology². Investment in arts and culture is highly correlated with the cultivation of both talent and tolerance. In recent years, Nashville has made great deliberate strides with artistic and cultural initiatives to enhance a creative infrastructure. This infrastructure is threefold:

- being intentional about placemaking as a means to further economic development,
- creating means to improve overall access and participation in the arts and culture, and
- sustaining a reputation and reality of dense and diverse creative talent.

Nashville, in fact, is exemplary as a cultural hub in several ways. The region as a whole ranks fourth highest among all U.S. cities on the Creative Vitality Index (CVI) developed by the Western States Arts Federation. Nashville leads many other cities well-known for their cultural roles in the nation, so the Nashville CVI of 2.15 is particularly notable in that it is 80 percent higher than its closest competitor, Austin, Texas (1.23). Nashville's hallmark worldwide is its role as a creative and entertainment center. Economic impact of the music industry, as the leading component of this activity, contributes nearly \$10 billion into the area annually, as reported by the Research Center. Increasingly, a broad understanding of cultural vitality involves evidence of creating, disseminating, validating and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life³. Cultural vitality within a given community represents both arts and cultural activity and the ability of residents to access it. Lacking either of these will lead to a weakness in any given population's ability to interact with a city's offerings. Recognizing that in any city, there are nodes of greater concentration and activity in entertainment and art

² The Rise of the Creative Class, Richard Florida, 2002

³ Maria Rosario Jackson, 2006, "Cultural Vitality in Communities: Interpretation and Indicators, The Urban Institute, <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/cultural-vitality-communities-interpretation-and-indicators>

districts, the capability of individuals to arrive at those nodes easily is an important factor of overall cultural participation.

That said, the diffusion of cultural activity and assets throughout the entire area is important so that arts and culture are embedded in the life of neighborhoods and individuals, and not merely something external to their surroundings. This analysis examines each of these aspects and synthesizes understanding of the cultural landscape as a blend of both.

The cultural mix of assets and activities appears on a continuum of intensity and volume throughout the city. The analysis yields a range of quintiles of this intensity and volume across the council districts of the city. This treatment first appears for the overall composite values and then for each of the component measures. The four component measures are:

- **Household profile**, oriented to assess the population's ability to access city-wide, as well as local, arts and culture activity. These include measures of household income, educational attainment, transportation access and spending on cultural and arts activities.
- **Infrastructure profile**, encompassing those measures that facilitate or impede population access to arts and culture. These values include public transportation, opportunities for other travel access such as walking or bike riding, and overall safety of areas.
- **Private arts and culture assets and activities**, generated through the survey research process and numerous public and proprietary databases. Included in this are organizations, venues and other facilities that operate from a location and engage in whole or in part in cultural and arts activity, as well as those organizations that function in various locations with cultural and arts activity.
- **Public arts and culture assets and activities**, also developed through the survey research process and various databases. These are location-based assets and activities, including libraries, community centers, schools, venues, public art and other location-based activity owned or operated by the public sector.

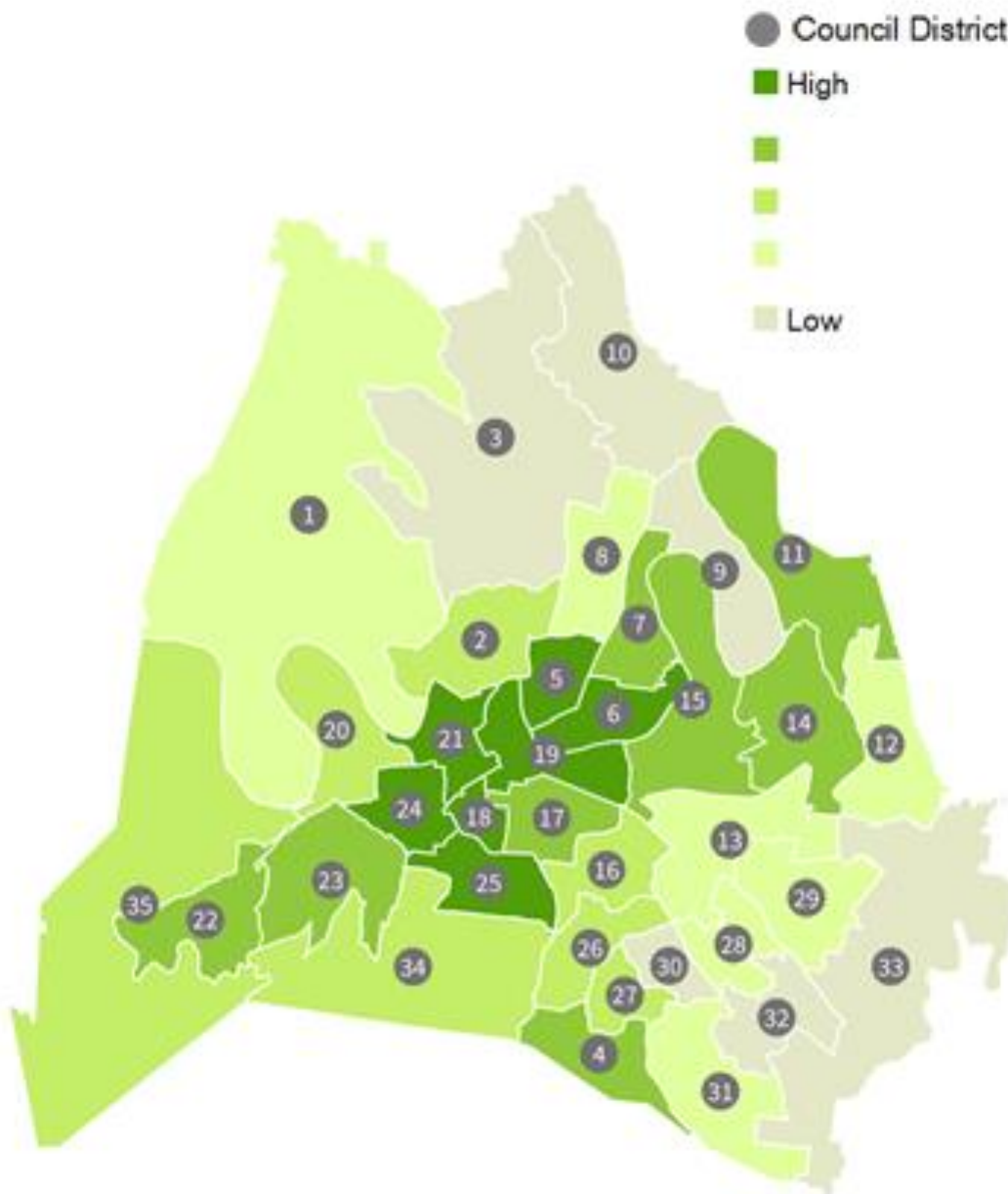
The display of cultural activity indicates a number of patterns. Data is portrayed in quintiles from highest levels of activity to lowest. A number of patterns are in evidence across the areas of the city:

- Not surprisingly, this activity and asset base is stronger near the center of the city where greater density of all activity is present, although the strength of this vitality is not confined to the Central Business District.

- The highest activity is apparent in East Nashville, to the immediate west and to the south. These are all areas of relatively high population density, a mixture of lower- and higher-income households, and ongoing development activity in recent years. Identifiable portions of East, South and West Nashville now are home to lively districts, some more formalized than others, that act as nodes for entertainment, arts and culture, along with dining and other amenities.
- Two corridors of next higher activity are present moving further west and east from the center of the city. Next, a strong middle level of activity exists to the south, the west, and the immediate north of these corridors. Three conclusions from this are the spillover effect of existing cultural activity into adjacent areas, the importance of major arterial roads to define the geography of cultural activity in a highly automobile-oriented city, and the level of interaction between residents living in one area and participating in the cultural life of an adjoining set of neighborhoods.

Lower levels of activity are broadly located in two clusters: the northern third of the county, where population density is lower (as suggested by large districts) and in the southeastern quadrant of the county, where population density and totals are quite high. The implications of these findings are the relative difficulty in fostering a high degree of cultural vitality where settlement patterns are highly dispersed, as well as creating anchor nodes for cultural activity in areas where the built environment is comparatively new and dense, but incorporates little consideration of public or private space for cultural nodes or activity. The Joelton area of northwest Davidson County is an example of the former, while the Hickory Hollow and Antioch areas exemplify elements of the latter.

Map 1. Continuum of Cultural Activity - Composite Layers



Within the composite level of cultural and arts activities and vitality, four key layers of data were synthesized. A major factor in the success of arts and cultural environments involves the mobility and the means of households to interact with a range of what is available. Access to disposable income, educational opportunity, transportation and patterns of consumption in

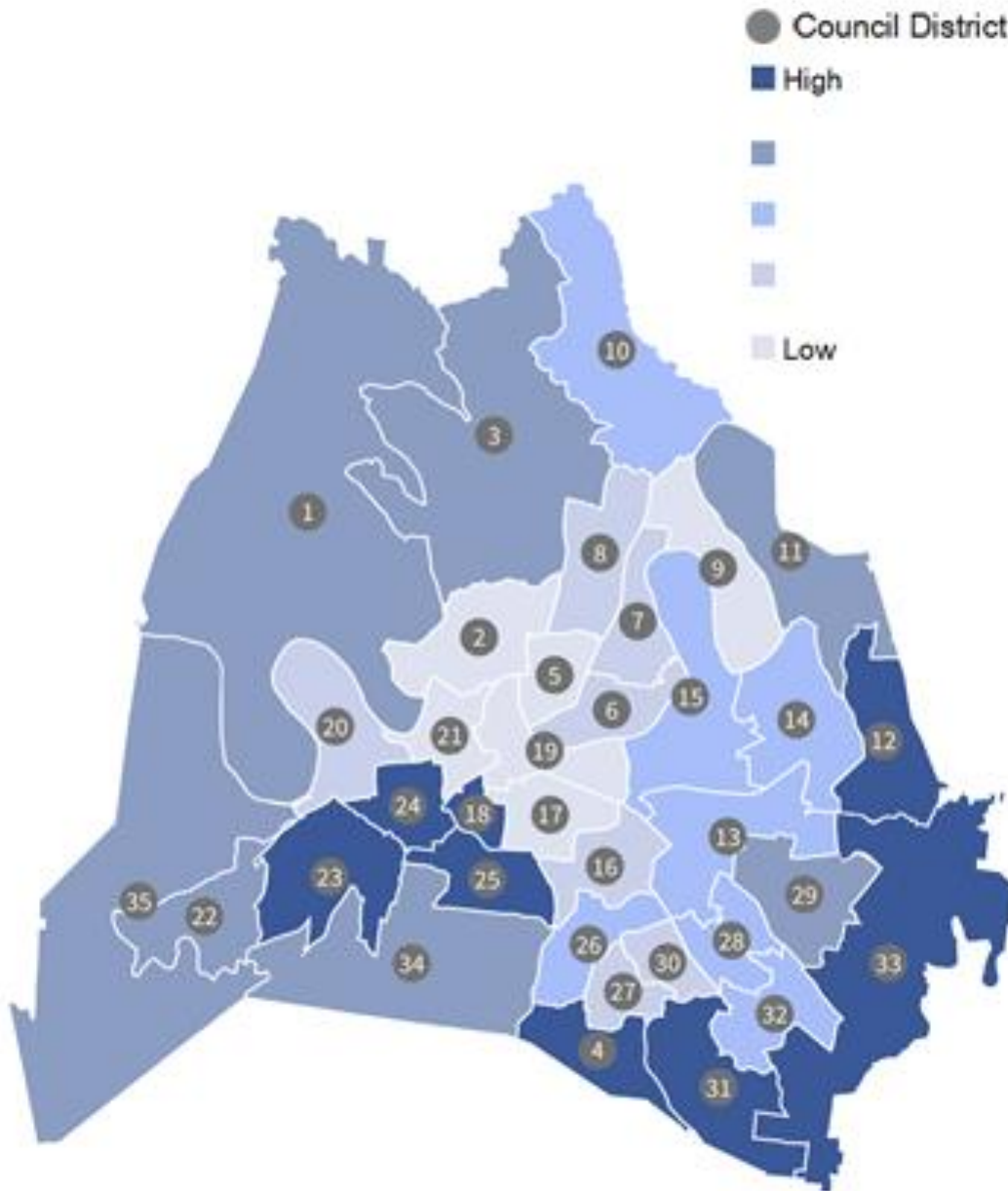
arts and culture comprise key variables that together shape an existing ability to interact with arts in both the immediate locale and throughout the city.

In examining the household layer, a number of important patterns emerge, including:

- Highest levels of household means to access arts and culture are found in a cluster in the immediate area west of the Central Business District and then along a broad periphery in the southeast. Particularly, for the peripheral southeast, the combination of values is important, suggesting that population exhibits a propensity for spending in arts and culture and has educational levels and vehicle options linked to accessing assets and activities in the area. Areas of highest affluence, education, spending on arts and culture, and vehicle ownership are concentrated to the west and southwest of downtown, extending for a long distance. Households in the southeast, interestingly, demonstrate solid, though overall lower, performance on those measures, suggesting that they too have high interest in, but less access to, culture and arts.
- The next highest area of household access to cultural activity is concentrated in the western third of the county, with two nodes in the east. As noted, the relative abundance of major arterial roads functions as a means for greater access to arts and cultural offerings, even when more distantly located from residences.
- Next, a large area of strong household access to activity is found in a large area in the east and southeast of the city. Households exhibit many of the characteristics that relate to participation in, interest in, and means to access cultural activity, even where other data show a comparatively lower presence of assets in those zones.
- Lastly, lowest ranges of resident household means and access to cultural activity are concentrated in the central areas of the city, particularly the near north, near south and near east. Historically, many of the city's areas with lowest household incomes, educational attainment levels, vehicle ownership and household purchasing for arts and culture have been in or near the downtown area. The pattern of urban migration in North America has typically been of movement away from central cities to less dense areas, with few exceptions. Consequently, those with less means to move from inner-city areas have typically been those remaining in greater number, with means identified as income, education, mobility, age or other characteristics.

In recent years, Nashville has seen a considerable level of new residential development in and near downtown. Some of this has been through gentrification, and others have occurred as infill to previously vacant or underused property. As such, these areas in the lower ranges of measures are in transition. The relative newness of influx and its impact on household means and access to cultural activity may be clouded by the longstanding status of these areas as highly limited to such means.

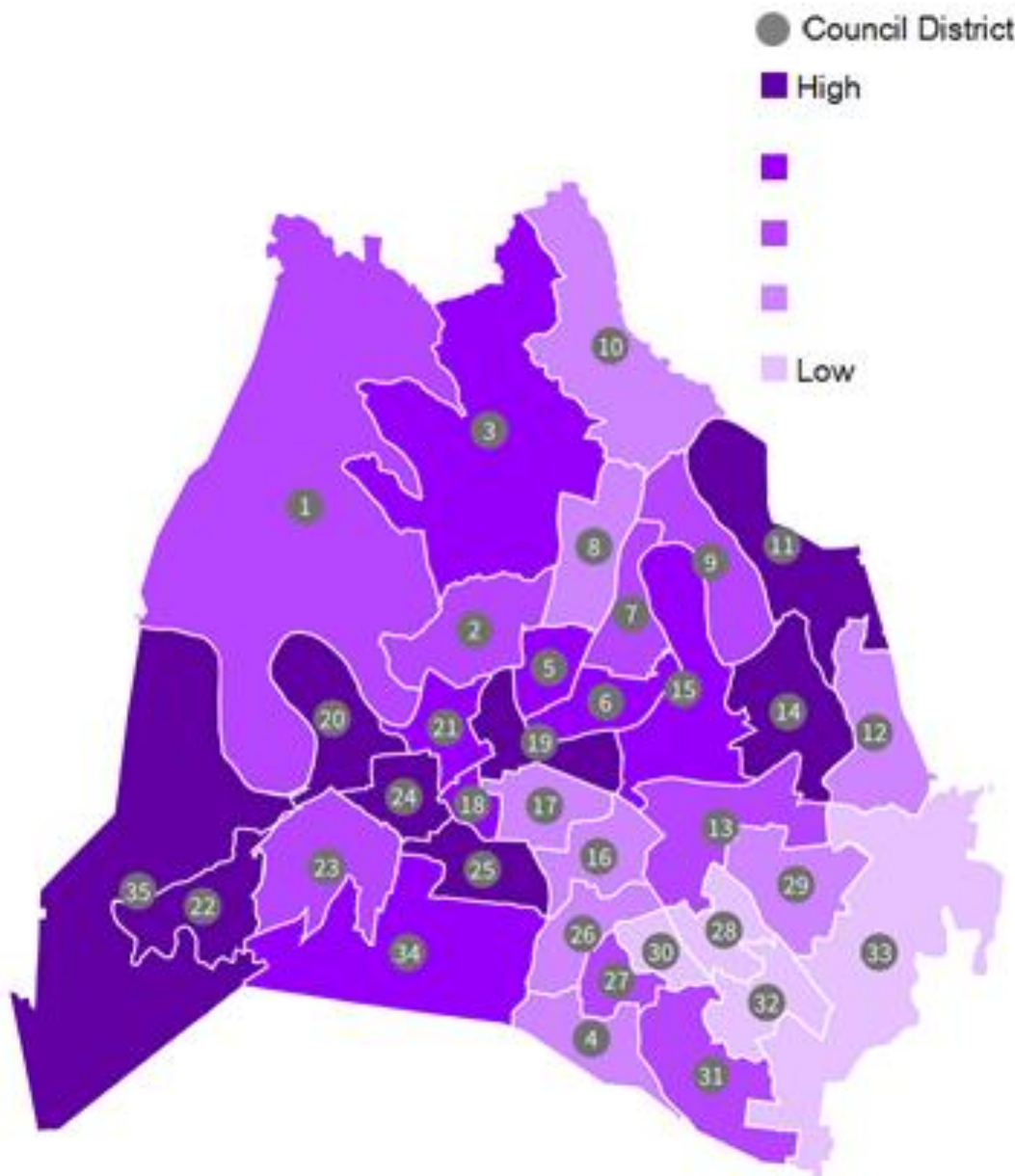
Map 2. Cultural Activity - Household Layer



The infrastructure of a community is a way that public investment offers accessibility to the cultural life of the city. The ability of residents to ride, walk or bike to locations to enjoy cultural offerings in their immediate surroundings, as well as those in other parts of the city, can be impacted substantially by the presence or absence of transportation and infrastructure such as sidewalks and bike routes, as well as both bus routes and stops with proximity to homes and

destinations. Also, the level of safety and crime in a given area suggests the overall ability of residents to travel and engage with arts and culture in those areas. In Nashville, this infrastructure is most prominent in the Central Business District, but also in several areas of the west, southwest and far east of the city. Next highest areas of concentrated infrastructure are in the more densely settled areas to the east and west of downtown, as well as nodes to the north and south. Moderate levels of infrastructure to access cultural life, then, are scattered through the city, with lowest levels of this infrastructure found in the populous southeast of the city.

Map 3. Cultural Activity - Community Infrastructure



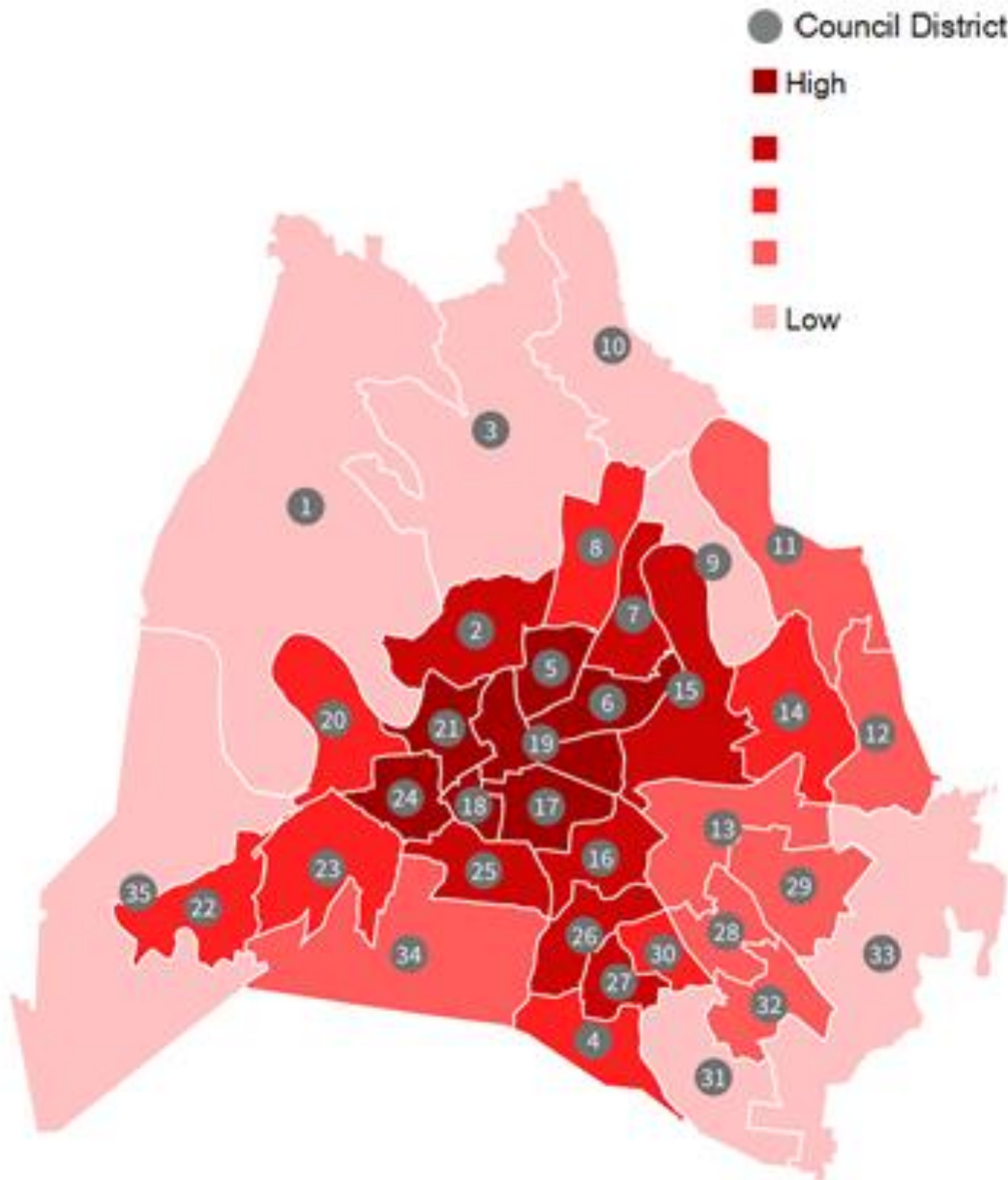
Nashville's cultural life thrives in part because of a lively commercial music and entertainment sector. Few cities are as world-renowned as Nashville for prominence in music. Private businesses provide a large and diverse array of artistic and cultural settings, including art galleries, museums, performance halls and creative spaces. More than 4,000 such private establishments were included in the analysis of these activities. Not surprisingly, a high

concentration of activity occurs near the city's center, though it is not limited to the Central Business District.

Corridors to the west, south and east all illustrate existing and emerging high levels of privately owned and operated cultural and artistic endeavors. The next highest level of private investment and activity is basically in a ring encircling the core of the city. It is not unusual that commercial enterprises are oriented toward more dense settlement areas, both out of legacy roles as well as a convergence of destination by routes and, consequently, highest spending. Examples of this would include more cultural and arts assets present in areas such as Waverly-Belmont, 12 South, Hillsboro Village and Five Points. It will remain useful to continue to monitor growth of private-sector arts and cultural activity along each of the corridors where there now appears strength that is extending outward to the city's edge. Investments that can lead to more decentralization of arts and cultural assets and activities represent an important means of making arts more accessible and inclusive.

Given the continuing relatively high concentrations of private-sector assets in more populous areas, proactive policy efforts to boost viable cultural activity in less frequented areas will ensure that those get a secure foothold. Priority for organizations that engage geographically peripheral areas is one way city policies can advance what the marketplace alone might view as less compelling. Combining these policies with other efforts to strengthen sense of community, along with other social and economic objectives, can forge new opportunities to understand the pivotal role culture and arts play in communities in general. Additionally, support for a range of supportive practices can bolster cultural growth in more marginal areas, including programs encouraging artist housing, co-op space, maker communities, mixed-use retail/housing, pop-up venues and other innovative examples. Also of special importance is attention to private-sector arts efforts aimed at special populations, particularly those experiencing multiple isolation factors, such as the young, the elderly and those with disabilities or with language barriers.

Map 4. Cultural Activity - Private Sector Layer



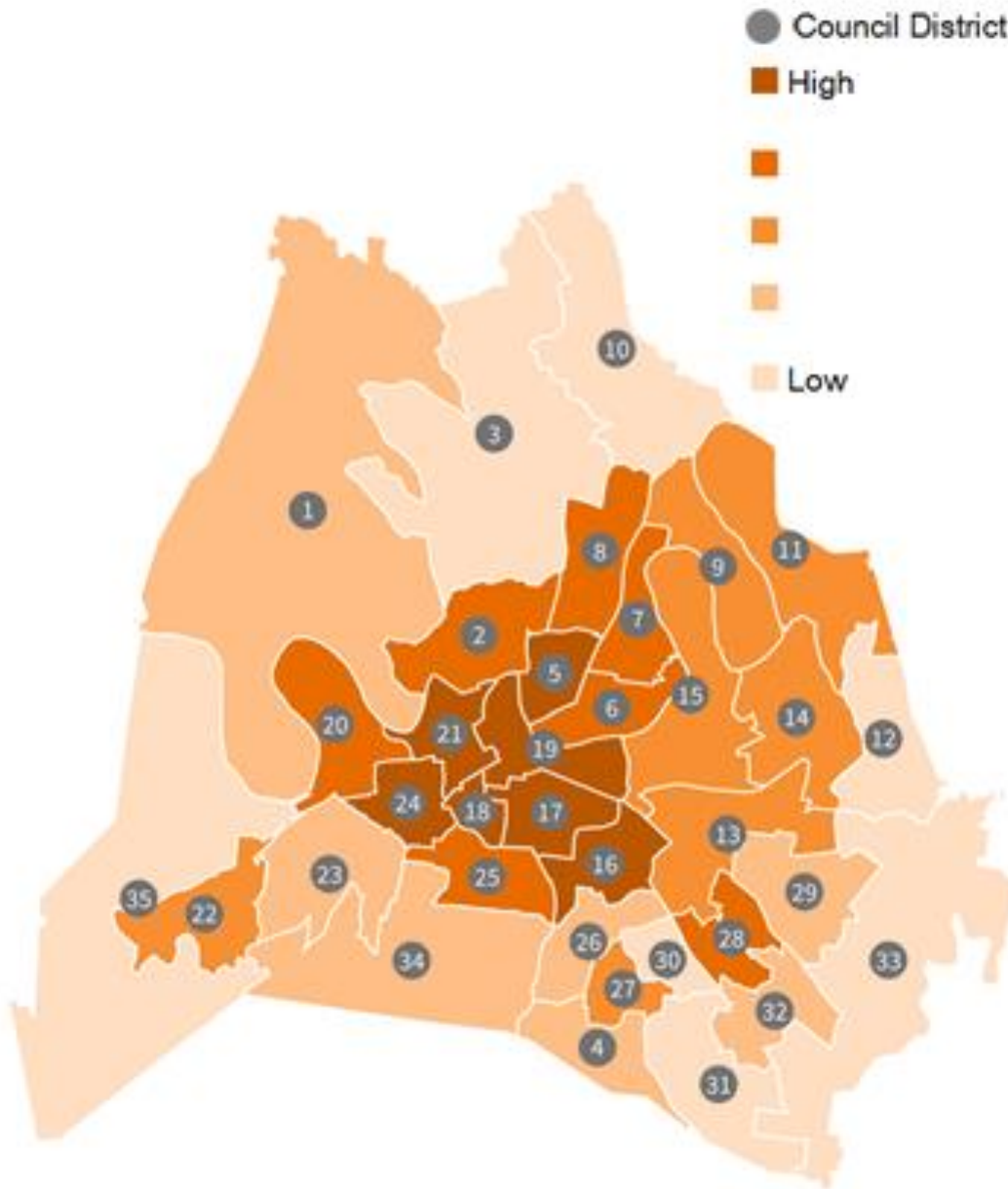
The investment of the public sector in its support of cultural and arts activities represents an important demonstration of the civic commitment to this feature of the community. Once again, the central core of the city, not limited to the Central Business District, has served as the leading area for volume and intensity of activity and assets. The public sector, through various venues, libraries, schools, community centers and public art, also displays strong levels,

particularly to the north and near east of downtown. Collectively, the downtown core and North Nashville represent highest quintiles of publicly supported presence of cultural activity, followed by East Nashville. Less densely populated far north and western areas of the county suggest a less robust presence of public cultural activity. The southeastern sector, while very populous, is less robust overall in public-sector offerings, with the exception of a strong central node in the area.

Nashville is fortunate to have many public facilities across the city that can be widely used in relation to culture and the arts. Community centers and libraries provide a variety of facilities, services and programs that operate in many neighborhoods throughout the city. Additionally, Metro Nashville Public Schools have properties in all areas of the city. Each school typically has an auditorium, and numerous schools have band rooms. These existing facilities provide an excellent setting within neighborhoods for new and broader uses as venues for cultural activities. It is extremely important to reexamine city policies and practices regarding the use of these public facilities. Public schools represent one of the largest components of city property and are widely accessible to the public, regardless of income level or population density. Yet, performance, rehearsal and practice, gallery, classroom and other space frequently is lacking – through cost or accessibility – for many organizations throughout the city. School auditoriums, band rooms and other facilities are potentially among the most desirable locations and facilities for community culture and arts activity in many neighborhoods, yet are inaccessible to those uses and users due to policy or practice. Many outstanding programs function in the public schools, with Music Makes Us as a notable example. Yet, many other areas of culture and arts express desire for much greater use of public school facilities.

Likewise, public parks and libraries are important facilitators of cultural and arts activities, but their budgets typically contain only small outlays for those. The 2016 Metro Parks and Recreation budget allocates \$1.1 million to the arts and history program, and the Nashville Public Library \$0.6 million for its Special Collections division, as representations of specialized cultural programs, out of overall budgets of \$34.4 million and \$26.7 million, respectively. Out of a total of \$50.6 million identified in the collective budget as "Recreational, Cultural, Conservation, and Community Support," less than \$5.0 million is directly related to arts and cultural programs and activities.

Map 5. Cultural Activity - Public Sector Layer



The overall distribution of cultural assets and activities throughout the city presents another way of perceiving the patterns in place. A high concentration of activity is found near the center of the city. This is not surprising with the long historic role of this, or any, major city center. Further, the convergence of population and travel has made the Nashville Central Business District an important area of investment by the public and private sectors over many years. The

result of these investments has been dynamic growth in the city center as a vibrant entertainment zone that encompasses a wide range of arts and culture. Nashville's downtown has become a case study in revitalization of a city core as a lively place for experiencing cultural activity. Along with this has been a full array of other economic growth, with ongoing increases in construction of commercial and residential structures.

The key opportunity now for the city is to extend this intentionality of effort to ensure that other cultural activity nodes flourish and develop. Public policy through a host of major initiatives over two decades helped transform Nashville's downtown into the contemporary success that it is. Many efforts around the city have sustained cultural nodes, from 12 South to Five Points, Germantown and others. Continued attention to areas such as Richland Park, Old Hickory, Madison, Donelson and Inglewood can prompt development that draws on a cultural and arts identity alongside an array of localized economic activity.

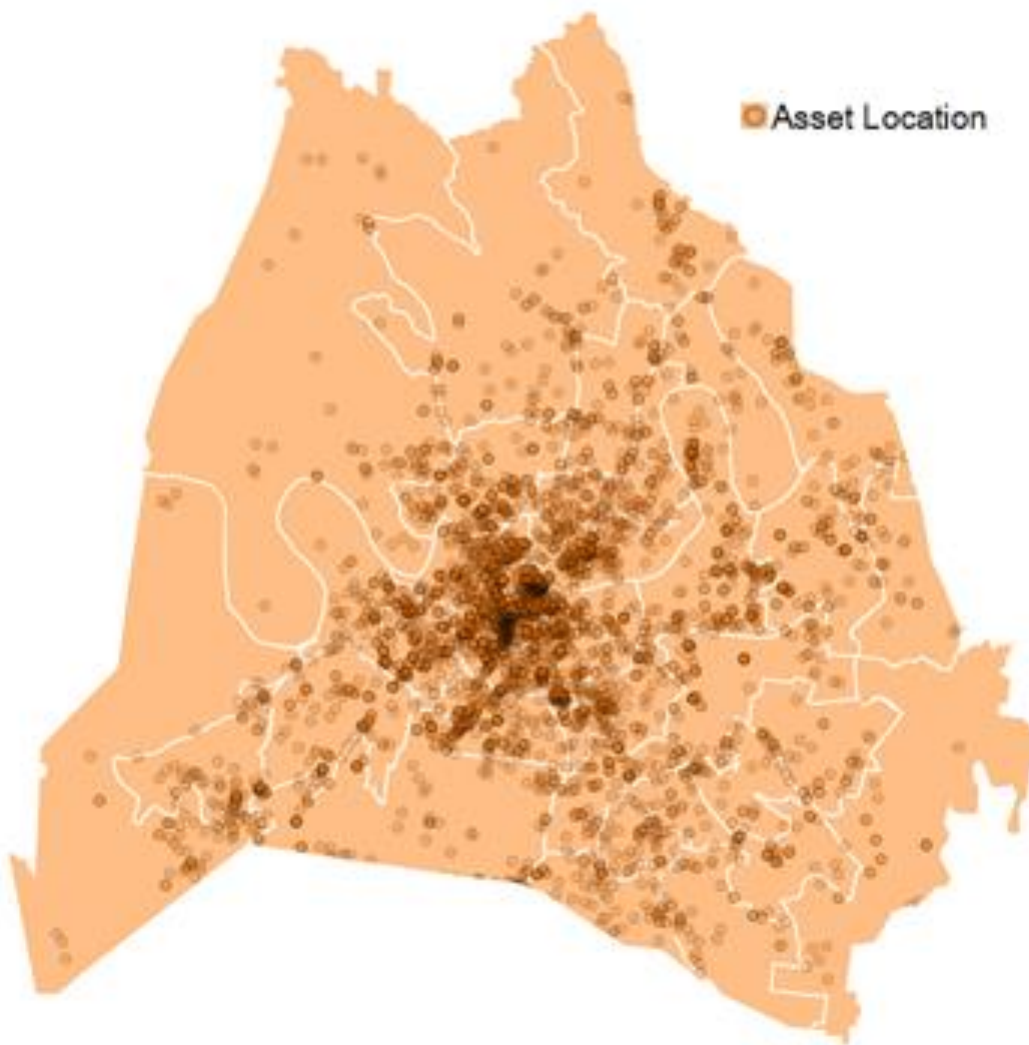
The recognition that many historic nodes remain comparatively dormant or struggling and other populous areas lack even the setting or infrastructure for a community node all point to the high importance of intentionality of planning, resources and collaboration to infuse momentum throughout many parts of the city for cultural activity. Just as downtown cultural revival and growth have been critical to the overall image and reality of the locale for business recruitment, residential development and community-wide support, heightened attention to the cultural life of neighborhoods across the city can stimulate much-needed economic development and area residents and businesses coalescing toward these goals.

Major arterial road corridors are also in evidence originating from the downtown area, as illustrated by the linear clusters of cultural activity stretching into numerous directions. Additionally in several nodes further from the center, there are large numbers of assets and activities that take place. In terms of absolute proximity, most residents are within a relatively short distance of some type of cultural activities or assets. The two areas with smaller totals of activity are in the northwest, where population density is low, and in the southeast, which is quite populous, yet lacks some of the abundance of activity seen in older, populous areas of the city. The mere presence of assets, however, does not always correspond to issues such as capacity or utilization.

Particularly in regard to public assets, there is somewhat widespread presence of potentially much greater opportunity for use. In many neighborhoods, community centers and libraries function as centers for cultural activity and receive much use. Metro Public Schools facilities represent one of the largest assets of the public sector, as well as the most diffused throughout many communities. Many schools have facility space, such as auditoriums and band rooms, that could provide great opportunity for cultural and arts organizations as locations for performance or practice. With added means to access these facilities, these spaces can serve as important "bridge" locations that further the cohesiveness of communities, make arts and culture more readily accessible and stimulate public-private partnerships that generate resources for those communities and facilities. In many major corridors throughout the city where formal infrastructure is limited, there are significant public assets that are underused for cultural activation. Research interviews repeatedly pointed to the inability of artists, cultural

organizations, maker groups and others to operate successfully or continuously in the immediate locale that they originate in, or they find their most important constituent base in or both. Often, these cultural efforts are forced to operate with difficulty at long distances from where they most need or want to function, are compelled to operate in ways or places that create barriers for their constituents' involvement, are forced to continue to relocate due to changing facility options and costs, and, perhaps most of all, experience inability to access public assets that exist in their needed geographies.

Map 6. Cultural Assets by Location



A display of those same cultural and assets overlaying the demographic characteristics of each council district in relation to household means (as shown on map 2) to access cultural activities illustrates a number of important patterns. The layer of household data comprises the levels of household income, educational attainment, transportation ownership and spending on arts and cultural activities.

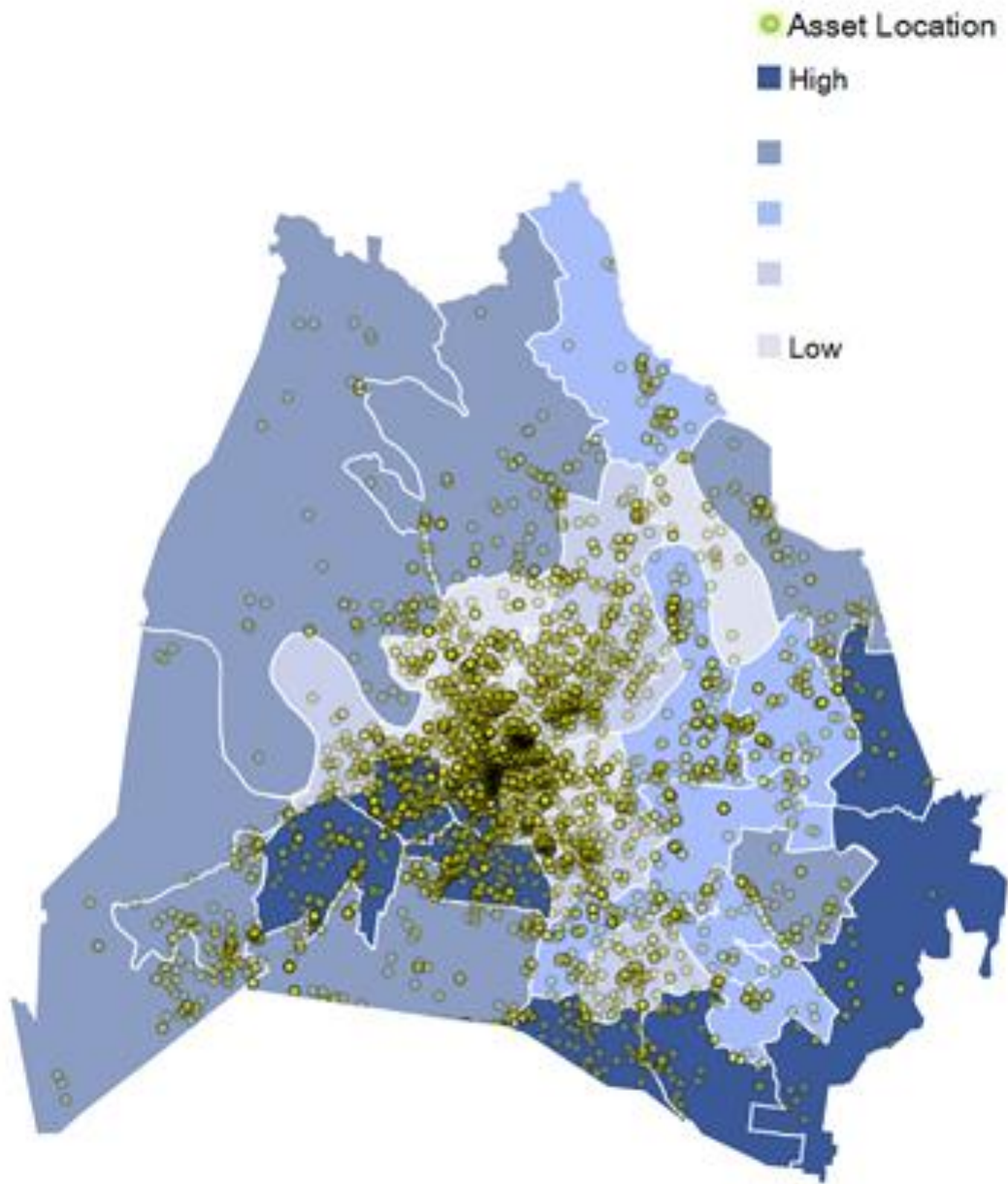
There are clearly some ways in which the total number of arts and cultural assets and activities (the dots on map 7) do and do not correspond with the aggregate household ability to access and experience those cultural activities. In many cases where incomes, education or transportation ownership is in a lower quintile, there also are few assets present. The lack of assets and activities in one's immediate neighborhood can be overcome in part by infrastructure that provides safe and easy mobility options to where those may occur. But that is only part of the solution.

The importance of cultural vitality diffused through communities and sustained by place-based activity plays a key role in cohesion of neighborhoods. The areas to the immediate north, east and southeast of the Central Business District are areas where household means to access arts may be limited and there is opportunity for more assets to be anchored within those areas. Also, the southeast quadrant further from downtown to the county border shows areas of rather strong household means to access arts, as measured through a combination of education, income, spending on arts and culture and transportation ownership. However, those areas experience quite low presence of cultural assets, particularly in relation to the large population concentrations in those areas.

Creating more anchor activity within communities is a stark necessity for many areas of the city. Infusing resources, modifying policy, creating infrastructure and incentivizing the private sector are all important methods to advance those objectives. The very nature of Nashville's development in a decentralized pattern following consolidation of city and county in 1963 has meant that strong, anchored nodes have begun or persisted relatively infrequently. Growth of limited-access highways further eroded the effectiveness of existing or potential nodes. So, the need is not merely to start from a neutral starting point, but to overcome decades of contrary development, to ensure that anchored nodes emerge and strengthen.

Several key underperforming, but well-connected, areas are well-suited for priority as cultural revitalization districts. Examples of these areas, such as Madison Station and Chestnut Hill, could benefit from direct public investment, tax increment financing for redevelopment, zoning reform and density concessions that encourage presence of artists and arts organizations. Among these, working together in public and private partnerships, priority could go to artist live/work housing, adaptive reuse of industrial property, and enhancing streetscapes with public art, lighting and other improvements. Just as the "broken-window" theory states that a negative public perception of safety and well-being can lead to more serious community failure, so a modest infusion of energy, resources and attention can allow a small anchor presence to serve as a coalescing agent for the image and reality of communities, leading to a "beautiful-window" effect.

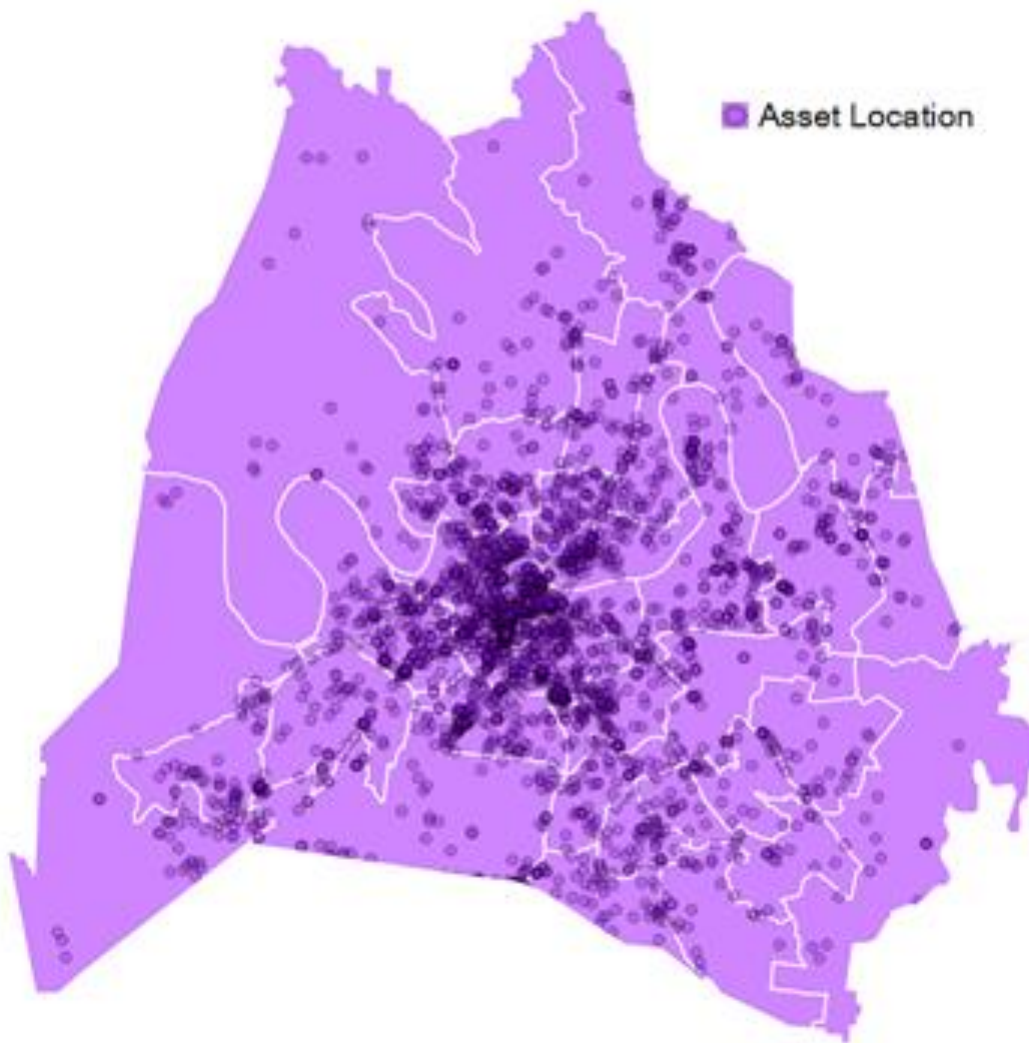
Map 7. Cultural Assets by Location and Household Layer by Council District



The vast majority of total cultural assets in the city are owned or operated by the private sector. This is a demonstration of the economic vitality of the city and the abundance of cultural diversity. Drawing from numerous databases, it is apparent that Nashville has many venues and facilities for arts and culture. Additionally, new uses, such as maker spaces, artist and manufacturing co-ops and pop-up galleries and stores, showcase the need for more flexible

cultural spaces. Yet, most Nashville residents live in areas where those venues and activities are not super-abundant. In fact, on a comparative basis, many council districts contain very few venue options outside of public assets such as schools, libraries, parks and community centers. While there are notable concentrations of activity featuring a high number of galleries, performance venues, and educational and practice facilities, this is not at all ubiquitous in the city. Rather, cultural assets in aggregate still remain concentrated in the city's interior and along a few major corridors, and do not correspond closely to the pattern of population density, growth or even overall consumption of culture and arts.

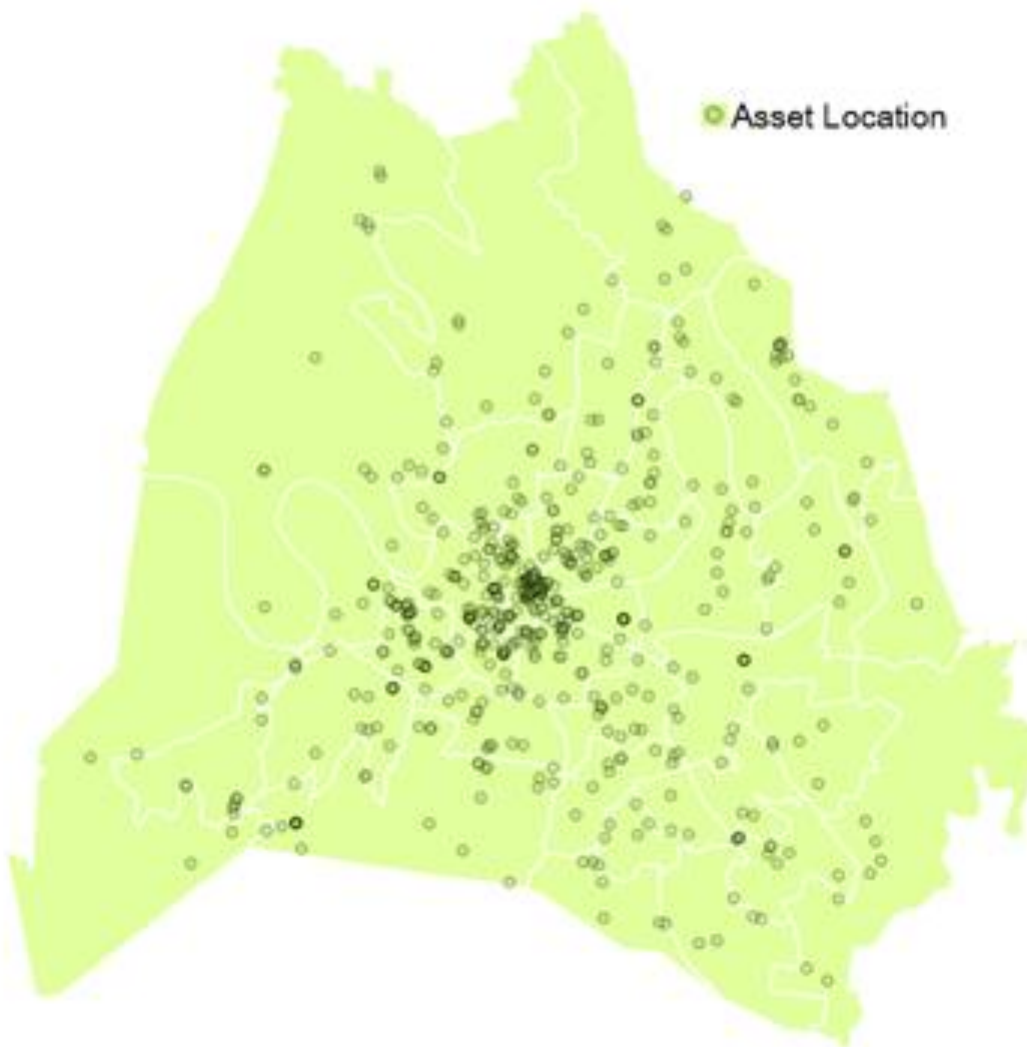
Map 8. Private-Sector Cultural Assets by Location



While public-sector assets form a small number of all cultural activity in the city, their role is very significant. Major venues in the city's downtown and around its periphery are important for the entire region's cultural offerings. The public facilities found throughout the city also represent some of the most vital connections residents have with culture and arts. Libraries, community centers and parks, schools and public art serve, shape and guide the cultural

richness and opportunity of neighborhoods and communities. Metro Schools particularly have a wider presence than any other public-sector facilities that also offer opportunity for performance, practice, display, training, education, making and mentoring and other essential aspects of arts. Continued attention to these public assets dispersed in all areas of the city, often as central nodes in neighborhoods that are recognized, supported and cherished by residents, can provide a greater outlet for arts to flourish in small areas.

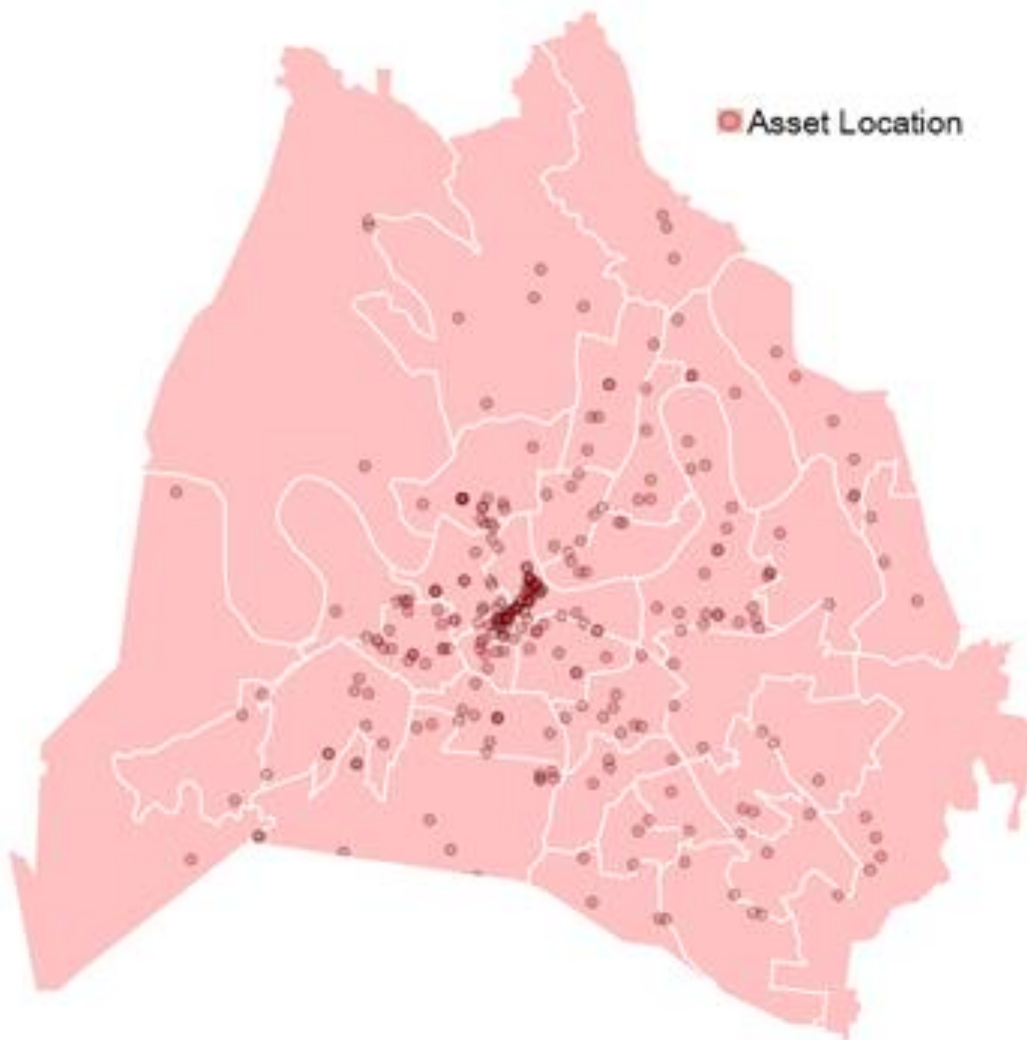
Map 9. Public-Sector Cultural Assets by Location



Large cultural assets, as measured by employment levels greater than 100, form a small but highly important set of organizations and facilities throughout the city. The concentration of these in the downtown core is not unusual in cities. Ability of residents in the city and region to access these central facilities is a key aspect of functional urban geography. Other large assets, both private and public, including schools, are somewhat evenly dispersed outside of the

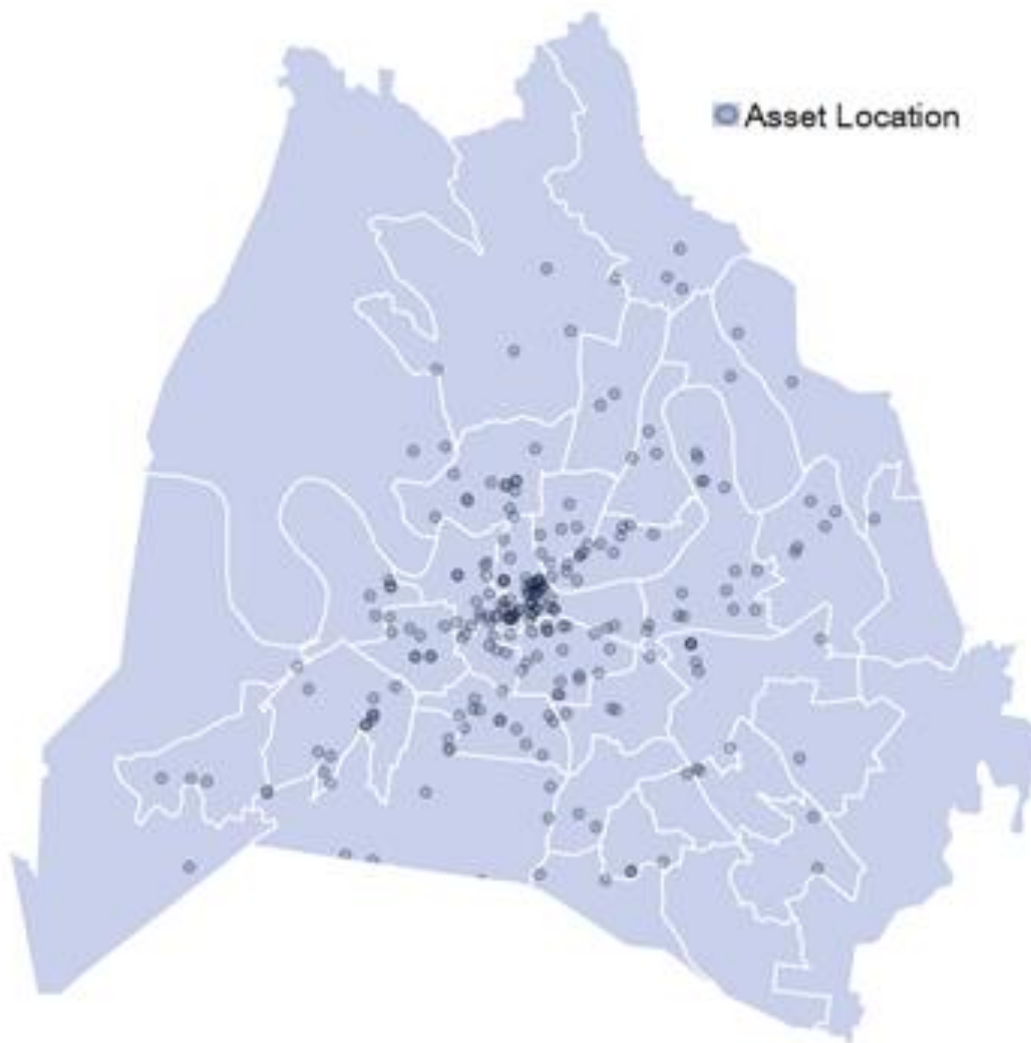
Central Business District. This also indicates that even larger commercial venues tend to cluster where population and transportation routes most naturally converge.

Map 10. Largest Cultural and Arts Assets by Location



Medium-sized assets are those involving employment of between 20 and 99 persons. These also are relatively dispersed outside of the central core of the city where concentration is highest.

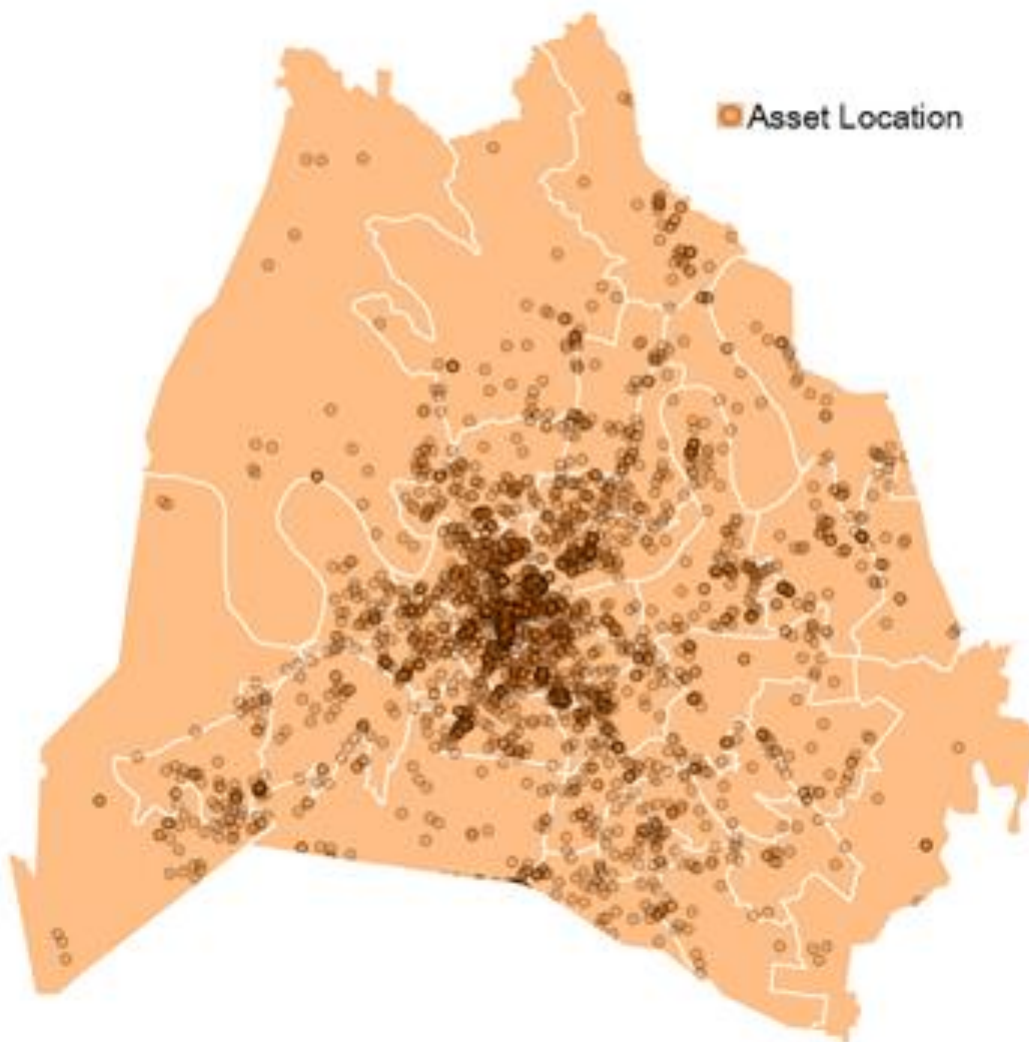
Map 11. Medium-sized Cultural and Arts Assets by Location



The vast majority of cultural assets of the city employ 19 or fewer workers. A major feature of the Nashville economy is a historic superabundance of entrepreneurship. With 23 percent of workers self-employed in the Nashville area compared to 18 percent nationally, there are many ways arts and cultural sector activities manifest this self-employment. The creative sector itself is enriched by self-expression through arts, so many individuals work as contractors or as self-

employed persons. In this regard, the distribution of small cultural assets is somewhat closer to the pattern of population density overall, once again amended by the relatively light representation in the southeast quadrant of the city.

Map 12. Small Cultural and Arts Assets by Location

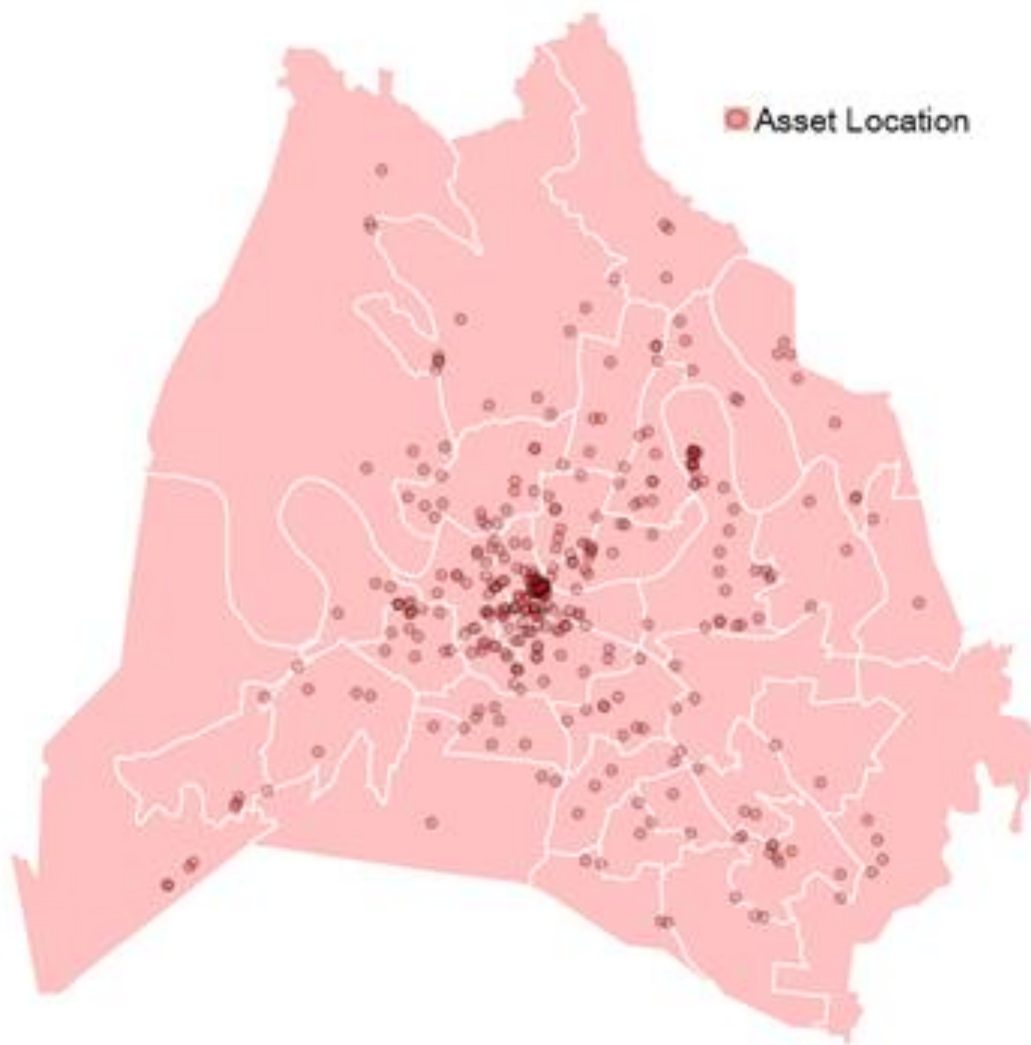


Among the cultural assets of the area, some of the most significant are those that function as venues for performance activities. Among these are public and private facilities that are

available or suited to these uses. Also, these are entities that have a primary function as a venue or which have substantial space or recognition devoted to performance. All districts have at least one or more venues present. However, the relatively sparsely located venues in the outer areas of the city suggest a number of opportunities, including:

- Examining additional venue facilities to correspond to high population nodes in some areas
- Increasing investment and effort to build flexible cultural spaces and/or expand the use of existing venues, particularly those that are publicly owned and operated
- Enhancing transportation/mobility options throughout the city to prioritize connecting residents with major venues in the downtown and other central points

Map 13. Arts and Culture Performance Venue Locations



Stakeholder Perspective on Arts & Cultural Activity

An important component of the research included a survey of arts and cultural organizations and their constituents, along with in-depth interviews conducted with more than 40 key stakeholders in the cultural sector. Altogether, more than 400 respondents provided important information and perspective on the environment of arts and culture in the area.

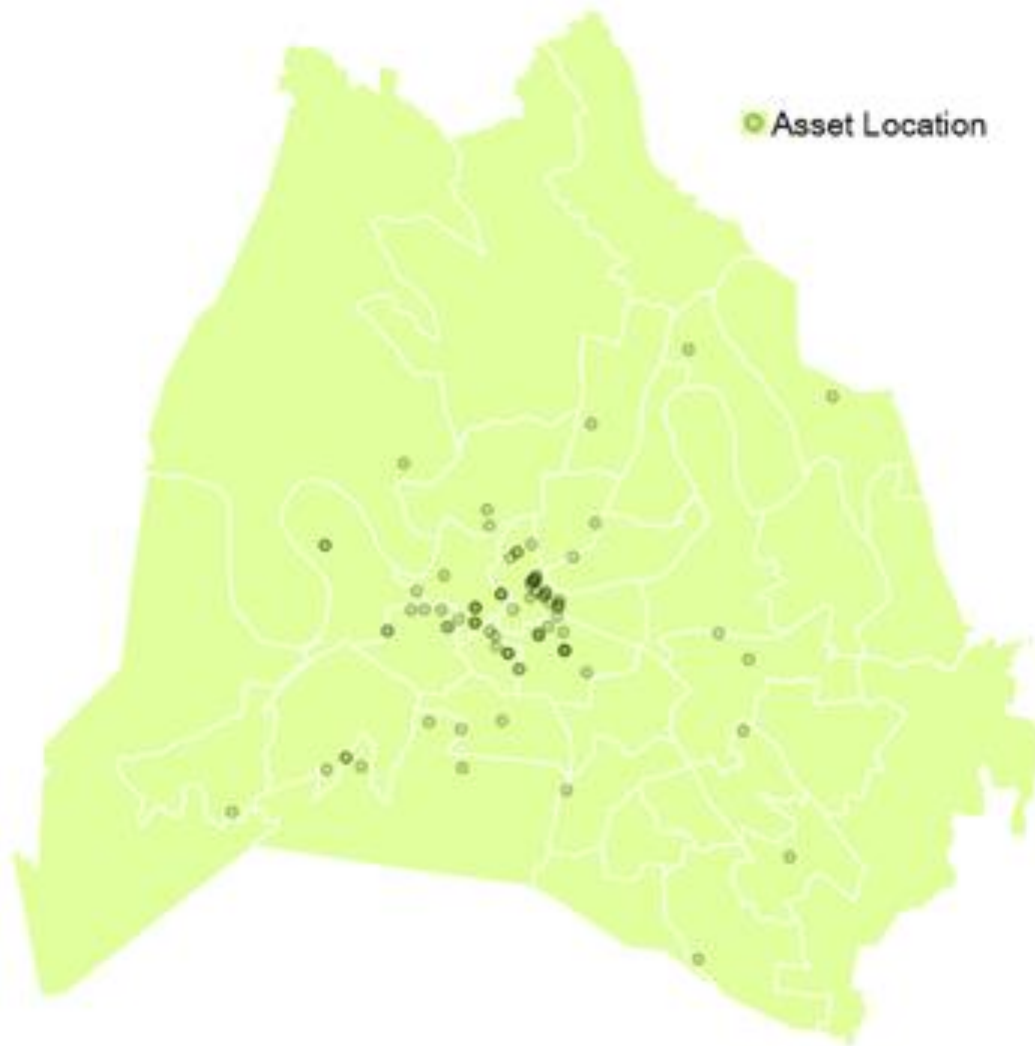
The composition of those responding on behalf of an organization demonstrated a wide variety of the arts and cultural activity in the city. Organizations that classified their activity as performing arts; arts, entertainment and recreation; and general arts and culture led the list, followed by arts education and museums.

Table 1. Arts and Culture Organizations by Response

	Percentage of total
Arts education	10.6
Arts services	4.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation	15.4
Media and communications	1.0
Performing arts	19.2
Arts and culture (general)	15.4
Visual arts	2.9
Museums	6.7
Alliances and advocacy	1.0
Historical organizations	1.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	1.0
Other	21.0

Survey responses were broadly responsive of the areas of the city, representative in a microcosm. A considerable number of organizational assets in and near the Central Business District provided information, as did a host of organizations operating from locations throughout the city. In many cases, organizations based in the core of the city also offer programming and services that take place in many parts of the city.

Map 14. Survey Respondent Cultural Organization, Venue and Asset Locations



A wide range of activity was hosted by respondent organizations, representing the array of cultural activity found throughout the city. The breadth of activities showcases the variety that is found and that was part of the response group. Nearly two-thirds have engaged in offering musical performance or creative workshops in the past 12 months, and more than half

provided visual arts, other performing arts or expert appearance activities. A large number of organizations provide a number of the activities indicated on the list.

Table 2. Types of Activity Hosted by Cultural Organizations in Past 12 Months

Musical performance	64%
Creative workshop	63%
Visual arts activity	56%
Other performing arts activity	53%
Celebrity or expert appearance/talk	50%
Art-making activity	49%
Lecture	47%
Fundraising event for a cultural entity	41%
Public demonstration	34%
Community festival	31%
Cultural heritage activity	26%
Public forum or debate	23%
Culinary festival/dining activity	22%
Historical event/commemoration	19%

Arts and cultural organizations also indicated a great deal of activity by type and frequency. Nearly a third hosted or served as primary organizer for 20 or more activities during the past year. A smaller number of sponsorships and partnerships occurred, though about one in four organizations was active, with 10 or more of those during the year. A great deal of activity that was available free to visitors occurs across the organizations, with more than 90 percent offering some type of free admission. Likewise, almost a third did not charge fees at any activity in the past year. The widespread presence of small and not-for-profit organizations is a key feature of the arts and cultural landscape of the city, with many diverse services provided, often without accompanying revenues or support.

Table 3. Organization Activities in Past 12 Months

	Percentage by Number of events in past 12 months				
	0	1 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 19	20 or more
Hosted a cultural activity	10.9	32.8	9.4	15.6	31.3
Been the primary organizer of a cultural	17.2	34.4	6.3	10.9	31.3
Sponsored a cultural activity	35.0	23.3	11.7	8.3	21.7
Partnered with one or more other organizations to organize a cultural activity	15.6	50.0	14.1	14.1	6.3
Been involved in an activity that was free to all	6.3	32.8	18.8	14.1	28.1
Charged a fee to an activity your organization was involved in	29.5	31.1	8.2	4.9	26.2

The average number of unique persons that were served by arts and cultural organizations in the past 18 months was 29,224. Again, given that many organizations are quite small, the median number of unique persons served in the past 18 months was 2,850. Among respondents, many cited particular populations that were a focus of their services or operations, in whole or in part. At some point during the previous 12 months, organizations were involved with activities or programs that engaged a wide diversity of the city population. Table 8 indicates the range of groups that are designated with special programming and services throughout the year.

Table 4. Profile of Populations Served – Percent of Organizations with Special Program Delivery and Outreach

Race or Ethnicity	
Black or African American	29.8
Hispanic or Latino	22.1
American Indian	12.5
Asian	12.5
Other Populations	
Low-income	35.6
At-risk youth	27.9
Persons with disabilities	23.1
Military veteran	15.4
Limited English proficiency	14.4

Acquisition and use of facilities typically requires much attention and planning. Many organizations experience challenges in meeting one or more of their needs for space and facilities to fulfill their goals in arts and cultural activity. Among respondents, nearly half owned their facility, a third rented a private facility and just under one in five rented a public facility. Another 19 percent has some special arrangement for use of facilities. No organizations stated that they had no needs for facilities at all. Obviously, many organizations achieve their needs through a combination of owning and renting facilities, as the total sums to greater than 100 percent.

Table 5. Facilities used by Cultural Organizations

Owned by the organization	47%
Rent private facility	33%
Rent public facility	18%
Do not use any facilities	0%
Other facilities arrangement	19%

A wide diversity of uses occurs in the cultural facilities. Table 4 cites only a sampling of that diversity. The wide range of uses for arts and cultural activity is helping in understanding the types of facility needs and challenges expressed by those users.

Table 6. Representative Examples of Diversity of Facilities Uses

Cultural lectures and events	Rehearsal and practice facility
Peer support centers	Art galleries
Performance and rehearsal	Offices for arts organizations
Social enterprise retailer of arts and crafts	Community education
Arts workshops	Songwriting
Arts education programs	Cultural meetings and events
Museum	College arts and music classes
Landlord for arts enterprises	Arts therapy
Performing arts programs	Maker spaces

The average size of facilities determined from survey research was 29,749 square feet. While this was quite large, the median was only 4,000 square feet, corresponding to the large number of smaller organizations and activities in the cultural and arts sector in the city. Overall, cost and availability of facilities were named as less favorable attributes of experience with facilities by organization respondents.

Table 7. Experiences with Facilities (1 = least favorable, 10 = most favorable)

Suitability of facilities	7.98
Proximity of facilities	7.67
Availability of facilities	6.66
Cost of facilities	6.15

Key concerns with facility cost included several major issues such as:

- gentrification displacing affordable spaces
- increasing costs of remaining in downtown locations
- overall rental costs that outweigh revenue, even in areas more likely to draw audiences with arts interests

Interviews with thought leaders and other key informants from cultural and arts organizations yielded many important ideas and suggestions for enhancing both their efforts and that of the city overall. In many ways, these corresponded closely with direct input on survey response. Some examples of these include the following statements:

FACILITY COST AND AVAILABILITY

Respondents were very clear on many topics relating to facility costs and availability. In general, the main themes that arose from input related to:

- Options for affordable facilities constrain efficient focus on arts mission of organizations.
- Growing into larger facilities is difficult because of too few affordable options.

- Scheduling facilities is often complex and time-consuming.
- Rising rental costs often mean trade-offs with achieving new revenue options.
- Facilities are not available in time periods that correspond to needs.

Overall, artists and organization leaders often mentioned the scarcity of facilities, as well as price ranges that fit their budgets. Numerous respondents indicated that free use of facilities was really their only viable financial option at this time. Others noted that many facilities had limited availability to the public, or were otherwise were available only to certain constituencies. Scheduling facilities can sometimes be complex, or days and times available for use do not fit well with needs for rehearsals, performance, exhibition, workshops, studio work or other needs for individual artists, groups or potential audiences.

Some organizations reflected on the changing dynamics of the city; in particular, accessibility mismatch with needs appears to be increasing. Specific points cited on this concern included:

- Overall, transportation congestion presents a major barrier to a more vibrant cultural opportunity for many parts of the city, as well as the ability to access the Central Business District's entertainment options.
- Existing public transportation routes or stops are often long distances from activities of many cultural organizations.
- Arts audiences and clients are often no longer located close enough to take advantage of many longstanding programs.
- Increasing concern points to pedestrian safety in relation to arts participants and audiences.
- Parking issues are complex and difficult in numerous ways for cultural organizations, particularly as a barrier in the downtown area with too little parking, too little free or inexpensive parking, too much reliance on valet parking and too little shuttle service to and from parking sites.

Instances of interview and survey comment again serve to highlight many of the major issues regarding transportation. Several key themes emerged from this input:

- Parking options are often limited and costly for facilities used by organizations.
- Free and low-cost parking options are becoming more expensive.
- Public transportation options are few or nonexistent for many organizations.
- Bus service and stops are infrequent and/or distant from facilities.
- Lack of transportation adversely impacts operations and revenue.

- Downtown experiences reality and perception of transportation and parking challenges.
- Furthering cultural activity in neighborhoods is hampered by lack of transportation availability.
- Transportation shortcomings often prevent audiences, facilities and artists from accessing one another efficiently.

Facilities themselves were often seen as too small for current or projected growth needs of organizations. In particular, respondents cited shortcomings related to inadequate storage space and limited ability to reconfigure space for multiple types of activities. Many noting space constraints for facilities stressed that their organizations need to grow incrementally into the next larger space, while often only comparable or much larger and costlier options were available. Accessibility for the disabled community was cited in very specific ways by respondents: it received the second highest mean score for “most favorable” aspects of venue options, and also tied for highest mean score for “least favorable” aspects, implying that some users are highly satisfied with the offerings, while others clearly are not. Interview responses particularly noted negative conditions as well in regard to ADA compliance with many of their facility options. Overall, a strong sentiment among organizations focused on a need for more facility and venue space by number, type and quality, particularly for growing and medium-sized organizations, including safe, modern, user-friendly space that was within reasonable proximity of their audiences and transportation options, whether public transportation service, more parking options, or both.

Interview and survey response provided important insights into the area of venues and facilities and illustrate themes with concerns that include:

- Facilities for many organizations are older and lack sufficient space, ADA accommodation, safety features and other needed characteristics.
- Venues and facilities are often unavailable during needed times during the week.
- Gaps in facility and venue size for organizational growth and flexibility impact many.

While the remarks of respondents represent only a small number of total responses from leaders in the culture and arts community, the themes coalesce around a few major ideas. Cost concerns are rising for many, with fewer options, rather than more, as the city grows in population and sees economic gains in many areas. Facility options are limited or nonexistent for many to match their needs. Facilities that are currently used often are less desirable due to capacity, condition or accessibility. Particularly, transportation issues create a whole dynamic of challenge, with high reliance on automobiles translating to need for ample, low-cost or free parking, with public transportation options few or nonexistent to meet the needs of many in their current facilities.

An evaluation of facility importance by users highlighted several of the key themes that emerged from the survey research and interview process. When asked about the importance of attributes of facilities, several dominant themes emerged. Far and away, cost of facilities is a chief concern for arts and cultural organizations and efforts. Another set of important issues then relates to the facility itself: condition, safety, capacity and reasonable proximity to constituents. Other items of importance included accessibility for persons with disabilities and suitability to target-age population, with each generating more than half of respondents, suggesting these are very important. The issues of surrounding area, parking and, lastly, access to public transportation registered somewhat lower in overall importance.

Table 8. Importance of Facility Attributes to Cultural Organizations

	Percentage Indicating Level of Importance		
	Very	Neutral	Not Important
Cost	84.4	15.6	0
Condition	61.9	28.6	9.5
Safety	59.1	27.1	7.4
Proximity to constituents	59.1	25.4	11.8
Capacity	58.3	29.1	10.3
Availability	54.8	40.5	11.8
Accessibility for disabled community	52.3	36.3	5.5
Facility is well suited to serve a target age	52.2	45.7	2.2
Surrounding area	47.8	32.6	19.6
Parking	47.7	46.1	2.2
Access to public transportation	28.3	47.8	23.9

The findings of the research point to a number of areas of interest, concern and need among the arts and cultural organizations and activities of the area. With growth in population, the economy and other aspects of city life, along with expansion by the large and diverse arts community, there are many ways that access and facility opportunities must be incorporated into plans to maintain and extend the cultural vitality of the city overall and its many neighborhoods.

Conclusions

The findings of this research provide an important foundation for understanding the current cultural and arts landscape of the city and future opportunities and challenges. First and foremost, creative placemaking is not simply about the presence of theatre or music venues; it reflects the complicated intersection between public and private investments and policies that undergird creative life and fuel economic development, neighborhood livability and quality of life. In general, Nashville boasts a broad range of public and private cultural venues and means for citizen creative activation. However, citizen opportunities are limited by physical location, financial means and socio-cultural elements like language and ability. Nashville has a strong cultural foundation, but has a strategic opportunity to reexamine planning, funding and public policies that broaden access to “creative life” in our city.

Key findings from the research include:

- There is a large and vibrant arts and cultural landscape in Nashville, with **more than 5,000 organizations, establishments and activities** comprising this sector.
- Across 35 Metro Council districts, there is **considerable variation in presence of and opportunity to interact with cultural and arts assets and activities** of the city.
- A **high concentration of cultural activity occurs in the Central Business District**, with additional density along arterial routes in each direction.
- While some cultural assets are present in each district, the **immediate north, northeast and southeast experience some of the greatest disparities between population density and amount of cultural activity and access**.
- Public-sector cultural assets, while dispersed throughout the city, offer additional opportunity for extended uses by the arts and cultural sector.
- A number of **challenges exist in meeting the facilities needs of the city’s cultural organizations and programs**, including affordability overall, adequacy for growing and medium-sized organizations, and proximity and access by target audiences.

Likewise, there are a number of important recommendations that stem from this research. These conform closely to insights developed recently through the NashvilleNext process and other community conversation regarding culture and the arts⁴. This report demonstrates that “cultural vitality” and “creative placemaking” are really the intersection of planning and policies that yield an ecosystem where cultural participation is the norm, not the exception. This report yields key data for future public and private land use and transportation planning economic investment strategy and cultural planning across the city, and possibly the region. Specific recommendations that would address cultural infrastructure disparities and access inequities include:

⁴ Arts & Culture Background Report, Metro Nashville Government, March 2013

<http://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Planning/docs/NashvilleNext/Arts%20and%20Culture%20Background%20Report%20-%20March%208%20final.pdf>

- Adopt requirements for focus on cultural assets and access in community planning, health planning and transportation planning protocols.
- Include cultural venues, studio/production spaces and maker spaces into the city conversation about affordability.
- Review the city policies and procedures relative to “pop-up” and temporary spaces that are a key means of commerce and cultural access in many communities.
- Increase policy research work around live/work spaces for freelance workers—disproportionately represented in the artist/cultural workforce.
- Review Metro capital planning procedures to include review of new public facilities/renovations for opportunities to include cultural use/activation.
- Examine/audit/review public facilities with both MNPS and Metro to extend fee for service cultural activation in under-invested neighborhoods and nodes.
- Determine tools and funding incentives necessary to extend reach of major cultural facilities and culture providers outside of the downtown core.
- Review economic incentive and policy framework to intensify creative and cultural small businesses in under-invested neighborhoods to support job creation and economic activity.

Examples from other cities show us that this type of cross-sector, multi-modal approach to cultural infrastructure works. When cultural programs and amenities are located in neighborhoods, they fuel social capital, identity, quality of life and economic vibrancy. The Memphis Music Magnet initiative includes more than 30 city/university/cultural/ philanthropy partners working through a long-range arts-based neighborhood development plan to revitalize the Soulsville community, long plagued by generational poverty, high crime and low educational attainment. The partnership has resulted in a community development corporation, a new arts charter school, the expansion of the STAX Museum of American Soul Music and dozens of new private businesses.⁵

Austin initiated Independent Business Investment Zones⁶ to help brand and elevate the role of creative and arts businesses as part of neighborhood redevelopment. This included creating a new zoning designation and coordination with the tourism marketing division to systemically brand “Austin-made” cultural products for residents and tourists.

In Oakland, Calif., a unified look at planning, zoning and investment incentives has fueled dozens of arts and maker startups, facilitated neighborhood development and fueled tourism. The Oakland Maker strategy includes both analysis of existing cultural venues as well as focusing attention on emerging models like maker co-ops and pop-up retail and art installations⁷.

⁵ <http://www.memphismusicmagnet.org/partners/>

⁶ Austin IBIZ Districts, 2015 <http://www.austinibiz.com/>

⁷ Kevin Lee, “Made in Oakland: How one city turned into an art and maker mecca, August 21st, 2013, <http://www.techhive.com/article/2047005/made-in-oakland-how-one-city-turned-into-an-art-and-maker-mecca.html>

We have a specific framework in our own city that lights the way. The recent investments in the Commons at the Crossing in the former Hickory Hollow Mall feature a combination library/park/ice center, house a vast community college campus, offer regular cultural programs, integrate public art and facilitate economic reinvestment in area businesses. This has been a strategic, focused and well-executed public/private investment and details a blueprint for scaling cultural placemaking through the county.

The opportunities for the city are tremendous in expanding its international recognition as an entertainment and cultural hub. Creative placemaking starts with ensuring that residents are an active and vital part of community creative life. The findings of this research provide a baseline for policy makers and community stakeholders to build on strengths and identify gaps in our policies and planning that will ensure that Nashvillians can participate equitably in a creative life and that participation fuels the economic and social life of Nashville for decades to come.

APPENDICES

Survey and Interview Respondent Input

The following respondent comments represent sentiments and input relating to specific topic groups' experiences and observations about cultural and arts activity in the city.

Facilities and Access

- “Rent is escalating.”
- “If we go outside of our own facility, most other nonprofit facilities are way too expensive for us to rent.”
- “In the many years in our location, the neighborhood has become gentrified and other rents have skyrocketed. We are worried about our fiscal viability here and may have to move in two years.”
- “Rental cost often outweighs revenue.”
- “Not available during work hours”
- “Date availability is a problem.”
- “Scheduling is complicated.”
- “Finding free space to use is a challenge.”
- “We struggle with intense scheduling.”
- “It is hard to find venues.”

Transportation and Parking

- “Parking lot in poor condition, limited spaces”
- “Limited on-site parking”
- “Many facilities lack enough parking.”
- “There is no free public parking during the week.”
- “Our venue parking is often full and it's hard for people to find space.”
- “Limited parking for events”
- “Nearby lot has become a pay lot and it is difficult to find on-street parking because of all the new businesses and housing.”

- “There is no parking; must park across the river and spend a lot of time waiting for the shuttle to show up.”
- “[There is] perceived difficulty among the public to park downtown.”
- “Limited access/need for valet for events”
- “Lack of nearby, easy-access, low-cost parking”
- “Location not near public transportation”
- “Far from center of metro area”
- “Limited availability and traffic congestion”
- “Not accessible by bus”
- “No public transportation in proximity”
- “Bus stops are not close by and transportation to area is not conducive for a class schedule.”
- “There isn't really any transportation.”
- “Nearest bus stop is 1.6 miles away.”
- “We are downtown, and most families are not.”
- “Originally property was very accessible, but the community has changed so much our clients no longer live close.”
- “Safety for walkers”
- “Affordable and timely transport”
- “Lost sales due to transportation”

Venues and Facilities

- “We operate in a very old building in serious need of repair. We serve a large community dealing with mobility impairment and are unable to provide them with the facilities.”
- “Not well-equipped, cramped”
- “Failing or outdated equipment”
- “Facility must be able to be used theatrically and also serve many other diverse roles.”
- “Lack of availability during work hours”

- “Need more space”
- “Too little space for large inventory, classes, events and gallery”
- “Landlocked and lack expansion funds, configuration limits capacity”
- “Our own facility is too small, but other facilities are too large or too expensive.”
- “Lack of appropriate meeting, event and workshop space”
- “Limited space for multiple programs”
- “Lack of size for studios, storage, classrooms”
- “Venue seating capacity must be large enough to generate revenue to cover costs. Smaller venues require more performance weeks, which add substantially to costs.”
- “Not enough space or storage”
- “Issues for our old building are the leading concern.”
- “We are a historic property, so handicap accessibility is limited and our ability to upgrade facilities is limited.”
- “Our facility is an older building with somewhat limited accessibility.”
- “Elevator is ancient and tiny, little use for persons with disabilities.”

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Culture Here: A Report on Cultural Assets and Activities

Nashville Assessment 2015

